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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Radio Service

OFFICE OF
INFORMATION

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Wednesday - March 19, 1941

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "GROW A GARDEN AND LIVE AT HOME." Information from the Farm Security Administration. U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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In these days of National Defense, "Grow a garden and live at home is a good slogan." It's a slogan a lot of farm families follow anyway, and believe in now more than ever. Live-at-home folks are people who live out of gardens and pantries instead of out of tin cans and paper sacks. They are folk who know a good garden means good food and good health at low cost.

Low cost and economy are important these days - especially to folk who must save and stretch their pennies. Some of these people are borrowers of the Farm Security Administration, and today these cooperators with Uncle Sam pass on to us some of their thrift practices in gardening.

In many parts of the country, as in the region of Amarillo, Texas, farm families are forming little cooperatives to buy their garden seed. They are buying high quality, good test seed at a third or fourth the regular price, because they are buying them in bulk and also probably buying the packets the seed companies made up last winter when work was slack.

Here's how a seed buying co-op works: Members choose among themselves a committee of local farm men and women to contact local dealers. These committeemen get bids from reputable seed houses, and place orders for enough seed to supply all cooperating families. They make every effort to buy through home merchants, both so they can patronize local people and so they can be sure to get varieties best suited to their climate and soil conditions.

Each big package of seed contains smaller packets - sometimes as many as twenty-five. These represent a wide selection of vegetables the average family is

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supposed to need. Actually, the average family may not plant half this many, ordinarily, but with them on hand they are likely to plant them now to keep from wasting them. This means they introduce a wider variety of food into the diet and are likely to gain better health. Another advantage of buying seed with your neighbors is that you are sure to have them at planting time. The seed purchasing co-op is not confined to borrowers of the Farm Security Administration, but is open to every farm family in the county. If you yourself would like to join, you ought to see the FSA representative, or your county extension agent right away.

For people who don't join, we might make a few suggestions. For instance, always buy seed from reliable firms. Buy it loose too, if you can - by the pound or ounce - rather than in pretty packets with fancy pictures - these cost money. And plan your whole year's garden in advance - spring, summer, and fall - so you can buy all your seed at the same time; - it's cheaper that way.

Suppose you have some seed left over from last year - some bought seed or some seed saved from your own garden. Are you sure they're still good? They may look good, but sometimes something kills the little germ in them without changing their appearance. Here's a simple test you might make: Put some seed on a wet blotter, or damp cloth, on a dinner plate and turn another plate over them. Keep the cloth or blotter wet and wait to see if they sprout. If they don't, or if they look rather weak or 'puny', don't fool with them. Get yourself some brand new seed.

Are you sure too, you're not about to plant in an old worn-out garden? It's true you can use the same old garden year after year if you re-build and enrich the soil, but there still comes a time when you ought to re-locate and start a new one. If you start a new one, be sure to have it near the house.^{*} This is so it will be convenient for weeding and cultivating. For instance, if Mother is the "maid with the hoe," she can work in it in spare moments from housework, or the children can go out before and after school, or father can run the plow through it when he

hitches up the team to plow corn. Also it will be much easier to gather vegetables - no one will have to walk a mile for an onion.

Locate the garden on a fertile, well-drained spot, protected from high winds. Have long rows and make them as wide apart as possible. Don't have a little tucked-up short-rowed patch at the kitchen door. Have it sunny too, and not shaded by buildings or trees. Besides, tree roots go down in the soil and "eat up" food the garden plants should have. Also be sure to put a chicken-tight, hog-strong fence around the garden. It would be bad indeed to look up sometime and see everything you worked for rooted up or scratched up by pigs or chickens. You want to keep the sheep and cows out, too.

It is quite fashionable nowadays to plan as near an all-year garden as you can. This means you will have more fresh vegetables the year around, and won't have to bother with canning or storing so much. Also, try some different or unusual plants this time - maybe some kohlrabi, the little "above-ground turnip" with leaves like porcupine quills, or okra with the fat little pods that look like stubby green pencils, or some table soy beans.

Remember too, this is the time of year to think about the county fair. If you like to win prizes, this is the time to think about them. But prizes or no prizes that little acre or half-acre garden of yours can still be worth money to you. Besides good health, it can easily save you \$150 to \$200 a year - and you can spend that money for clothes or home repairs, or medical or dental attention.

You can live on the "fat of the land" with few grocery bills, and lots of good health and happiness.

